



TikTok Marketing Playbook

A Guide to Creating Earned, Owned,
and Paid Media on TikTok

A Unique Platform Requires a Unique Approach

With **more than 150 million monthly active users in the U.S.** alone, TikTok is no longer a novelty for brands to experiment with. Not only are more than a third of marketers now using TikTok, but **over half of this cohort plan to increase their investment in the platform.**

TikTok has become a crucial piece of the marketing mix, particularly for businesses seeking audiences wary of more traditional, brand-centric advertising. The platform's organic, unfiltered vibe conveys authenticity, and builds unparalleled trust in both creators and the brands they promote. **TikTok users are twice as likely as users of other social networks to recommend a product or service found on the platform,** while **brands are remembered 40% more frequently on TikTok than on other platforms.**

But TikTok's emphasis on authenticity poses a stiff challenge to brands attempting to simply port over their strategy from other social platforms. Adapting to the platform's unique environment and culture requires marketers to adopt a creator-led approach.

This playbook lays out the strategies brands can implement to create high-value TikTok content that resonates with users and drives real ROI.

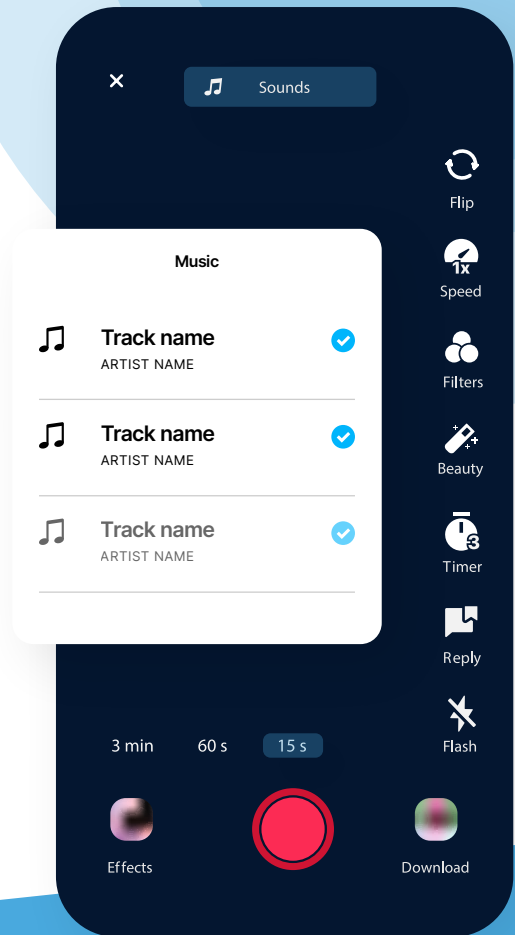
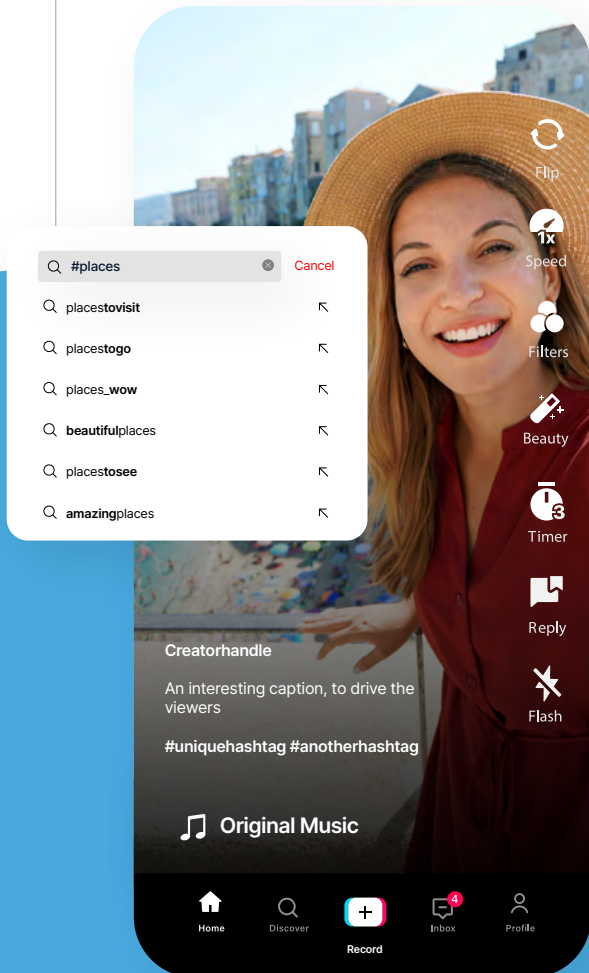


Section 1

The Basics of TikTok Content

Sound

A TikTok video's associated sound is important—content creators will often start their video creation with a distinct audio element, then build from there. The app's library of sounds varies from popular songs to movie clips to user-generated voice-overs.

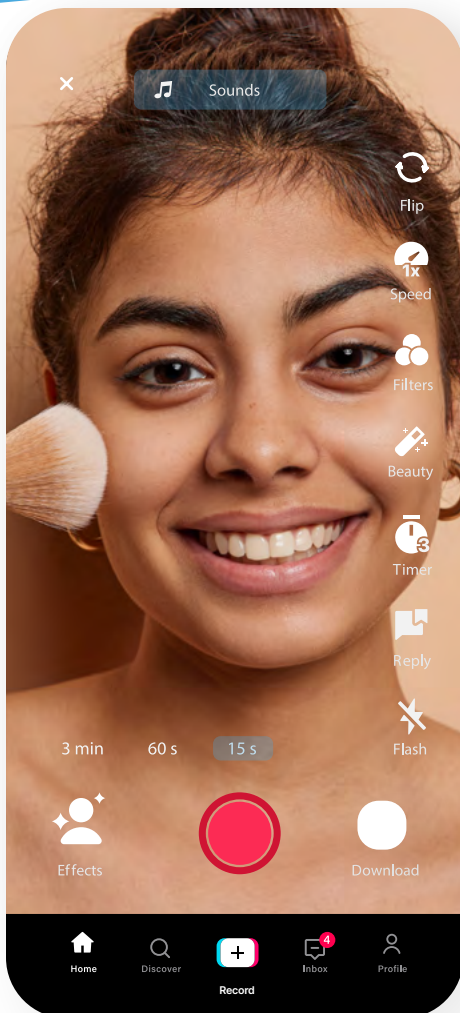
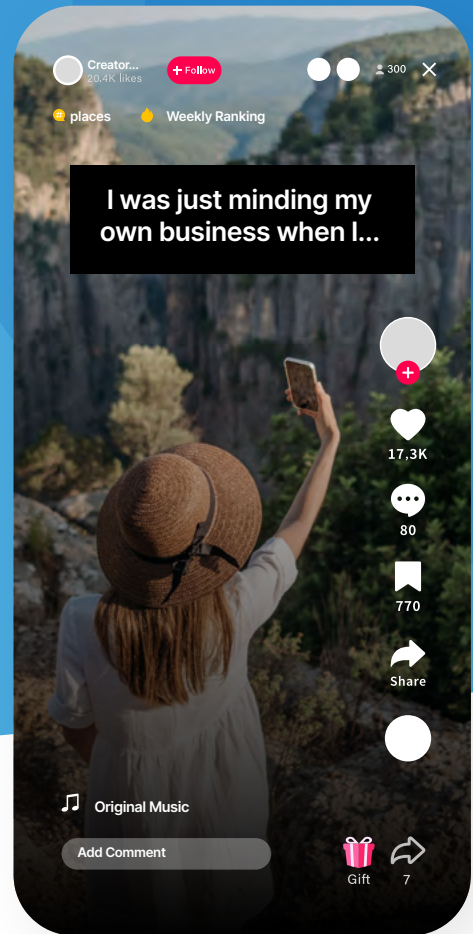


Trends

Viral TikTok trends often ignite around a certain sound or hashtag, with each creator applying their own editing and storyline to contribute a unique creative take to the phenomenon.

Structure

90% of ad recall impact is captured within the first six seconds, so leading with an engaging hook is key. The body of the video should pull viewers through to a surprising, funny, or heartwarming payoff. To minimize interruption, TikTok recommends CTA cards over verbal cues.



Production

According to the platform, content created within the TikTok app—rather than produced using other equipment or software and then uploaded to TikTok—generally garners more engagement and traction.



Section 2

5 Keys to Creating High-Impact TikTok Content



Key 1

Entertain, Don't Sell

TikTok users, more so than users of other social platforms, have a low tolerance for transparently self-serving content and the hard sell. They'll willingly embrace brands on the platform, but only those that respect the atmosphere and culture of TikTok at large.

So how can you keep from being *that* brand? Start by clearly establishing how each piece of content—whether owned or paid—provides value to your audience (not just your brand). Entertain them, make them laugh, or teach them something new—just don't serve up another stodgy ad.

Key 1 Brand Leader

E.L.F. Goes Viral By Focusing on Entertainment

E.L.F. Cosmetics' #EyesLipsFace challenge is widely regarded as one of TikTok's most successful viral campaigns. The initiative invited TikTok users to create short videos showcasing their makeup transformations using E.L.F. products, all while syncing their movements to a catchy original song.

The #EyesLipsFace trend became a cultural phenomenon

The #EyesLipsFace trend became a cultural phenomenon, earning unpaid participation from celebs like Lizzo and Reese Witherspoon, as well as media coverage from Forbes, Rolling Stone, and Vogue. By crafting content designed to be fun, engaging, and inclusive, the campaign prompted more than 1.7k creator posts and 37.9M engagements in the 12 months after launch. That totals up to \$15.9M EMV, CreatorIQ's proprietary metric for quantifying the value of consumer engagement with digital earned media.

\$15.9M

EMV generated in 12 months

0 mths
\$0^{EMV}

Campaign

#EyesLipsFace



1.7k

Posts



37.9M

Engagements

EMV

How We Calculate Earned Media Value (EMV)

To calculate EMV for a brand or campaign, we assign a unique value to a piece of content based on the engagement received from followers and consumers. This value is then attributed to the specific brands mentioned within the post. EMV can be used to evaluate the earned performance of individual marketing campaigns, and benchmark brands within their competitive landscape.





Key 2

Build Your Content for **Specific** Communities

TikTok users organically gather into communities with shared interests, demographics, and experiences. From broad categories like #BookTok and #Fitness down to the niche (#WitchTok, anyone?), these vibrant communities allow brands to tailor content that's highly relevant and deeply resonant.

More than three quarters of TikTok users say they like it when brands are a part of special interest groups on TikTok. Identify the communities most likely to have an affinity for your brand and products, then build your content and creator strategies from there.

Key 2 Brand Leader

Gymshark Taps Into the **#Fitness** Community

The booming popularity of athletic apparel brand Gymshark speaks to the marketing power of building and connecting with specific TikTok communities. The U.K.-based retailer carved out a \$1 billion-plus valuation in the crowded fitness apparel market not through mega-endorsement deals with LeBron James or Serena Williams, but via strategic partnerships with a vast roster of TikTok creators in the #Fitness community.

Gymshark CEO Ben Francis told Forbes

“We are a community that also happens to sell things.”

Through trending challenges, unique workout routines, and valuable training advice, Gymshark positioned itself as an authority within the fitness community. Throughout 2022, 915 creators mentioned Gymshark across more than 4.3k TikTok posts to garner 71.4M engagements. That totals up to a \$48.4M EMV—all thanks to the brand’s community-first approach.

\$48.4M

EMV generated in 2022

2022



915

Creators

Campaign

#fitness



4.3k

Posts



71.4M

Engagements



Key 3

Let Creators Lead

To the point about TikTokers not vibing anything that comes off as an advertisement, consider this: **ads created in partnership with creators garner 91% higher six-second view rates.** Users want to hear from creators who share their interests and values, not companies trying to sell to them.

Rather than striking out on your own, partner with creators who have already earned the trust of your target audiences.

An important note: handing the creator a script, or otherwise dictating their creative process, works against the authenticity you're trying to earn. Creators know best how to engage their communities. Give them the campaign objectives and relevant brand safety guidelines, then get out of their way.



Key 3 Brand Leader

Chipotle Embraces the #Keithadilla

When TikTok food critic Keith Lee (@keith_lee125) shared a Chipotle quesadilla menu hack with his 10M followers, the brand saw an opportunity. As the #Keithadilla craze shot across TikTok, Chipotle moved quickly to add the creation as an official menu item and launch a paid campaign centered on Lee and fellow creator Alexis Frost (@alexis.frost).



Chipotle moved quickly to add the creation as an official menu item...

From Frost and Lee's original organic posts in December 2022 through the launch of the new menu item in March 2023, Chipotle earned more than 33.3M engagements and 433.6M impressions on TikTok. Chipotle's decision to collaborate with Lee and Frost not only boosted the reach and visibility of the menu hack, but also demonstrated the brand's willingness to embrace and celebrate the creativity of its fans.

New menu item launch

2023

2022

Campaign

#Keithadilla



433.6^M
Impressions



33.3^M
Engagements



Key 4

Power Up Paid Campaigns With Creator Content

Marketers may be accustomed to influencer marketing operating as a siloed channel separate from paid efforts. But today's most successful brands are integrating the two strategies via creator-led marketing.

TikTok ad formats like Spark Ads allow brands to boost the visibility of creator-generated content through paid activations.

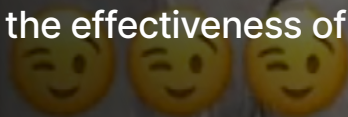
Entrusting content production to creators not only cuts down on costs, but leads to authentic content more likely to be embraced by your audience: over half of TikTok users say Spark Ads fit seamlessly into their feed and don't feel like ads, according to the platform. That means users—and even other creators—are more likely to create organic content on behalf of your brand by joining a trend or challenge.

This approach leads to highly effective, highly efficient campaigns that seamlessly integrate owned, earned, and paid content.

Key 3 Brand Leader

Walmart Sparks a Trend With Creator-Led Marketing

Walmart's successful #IYWYK (If You Walmart, You Know) campaign (a play on the popular If You Know, You Know trend) exemplifies the effectiveness of creator-led marketing.



The brand started by partnering with lifestyle creator Preston Konrad

Luxe home decor finds for less at Walmart

The brand started by partnering with lifestyle creator Preston Konrad (@prestonkonrad), who walked viewers through his experience shopping for luxury home decor at Walmart. This content was amplified using TopView Ads, and other creators were invited to participate using a Branded Mission Hashtag Challenge.

Creators across the platform lined up to share their own high-end but affordable finds at the superstore. Over the course of 2022, 93 unique creators published #IYWYK content on TikTok, totalling 32.1M views and \$2.3M EMV.

\$2.3M

EMV generated in 2022 from #IYWYK content

2022

Campaign

#IYWYK



93

Unique Creators



32.1M

Views



Key 5

Don't Be Afraid to Experiment... and Fail

The success of TikTok content can prove frustratingly difficult to predict: a post that ticks all the boxes can fall flat, while a “throwaway” post that took five minutes to create can blow up. Adopting a test-and-learn approach is crucial to honing in on what works best for your brand and target audience.

TikTok campaigns should be quick to plan and execute, allowing your team to frequently evaluate and iterate alongside the platform's constantly shifting trends. That also means you'll need a robust system for collecting and analyzing campaign data.

Don't be afraid to fail—just fail quickly, and learn from your mistakes.



TikTok Marketing is Here to Stay. CreatorIQ is Here to Help.

Armed with these guidelines, your brand is ready to jump in and start building a creator-led TikTok strategy that drives real ROI.

But best practices aren't always enough. Discovering, managing, measuring, and paying creator partners across multiple campaigns can be impossible without the right tools. CreatorIQ, the industry's most trusted software to unify and power advanced influencer marketing for the world's most innovative enterprises, is here to help.

As a badged TikTok Marketing Partner, CreatorIQ provides direct access to the exclusive first-party insights housed in the TikTok Creator Marketplace. Our Intelligence Cloud facilitates data science-enabled creator discovery, streamlines workflows, ensures brand safety, and drives meaningful measurement.

Ready to take your **creator-led marketing** to the next level?

[Learn More at creatoriq.com](https://creatoriq.com)